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A THEORY OF
CHRIST
FOR THE SOCIAL GOSPEL.

by

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Chapter I.

Introduction.

The Centrality of Christ.

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In the history of religions Jesus of Nazareth occupies a unique position. He was the founder of a spiritual movement within first century Judaism, which, after his death, grew rapidly, spread into foreign lands, and was organized into the Christian church. From the beginning he has been accorded a central place, for reasons which at first were ill defined and vaguely stated, but later were explicitly set forth in comprehensive philosophical terms. Through the intervening centuries Christ has held the central place in the Christian faith. He has been the very heart and soul, the inspiration and power of religious experience. Around his personality countless thousands have organized their faith and living. Such a fact as this is too stupendous to be lightly dismissed. In our day we face a revival of a familiar movement, to displace Christ from this central position. Within Christianity itself, there is a strong tendency to ignore Christ. In view of this fact it seems important that we state clearly the basis of our faith and try to establish with some degree of satisfaction the place we are to accord Christ.

In first century Christianity Jesus stood as

the agent of God in the moral redemption of mankind. By the inspiration and grandeur of his life he drew men to himself to disclose to them God's forgiving and redeeming love. His sacrificial death was believed to have effected a reconciliation between man and God thus providing a way of redemption which men might avail themselves of, if they so desired. Not alone his death but his continued presence in his church was effectual in the program of redemption. So morally superb, so striking and commanding in personality, so profoundly religious, and so astounding in his affirmations of truth was he, that to many he seemed to be God, born in the form of man. It was thus that men came to regard him. Not many years after his death he was worshipped as God. Men called him the Son of God and found in him satisfaction for the craving of their souls.

Through the subsequent centuries this Galileean carpenter-prophet has actually been the dynamic center of the Christian faith. However completely obscured he has been beneath theological dogmas, his power and influence have persisted. The centrality of his personality has waned at times, ^{but} and very dimly ^{his} as ^{his} true nature been discerned, ~~and~~ again and again men have tried to depose him. The movement in

our time which would dethrone Christ from his age long place of power is strong enough to alarm the church. Its effects upon the church have been injurious. Since Christianity has prospered or declined according to the vividness with which Christ lived in the hearts of men, we have reason to ask with searching earnestness, Can the church permit Christ to be deposed from the central place? As never before in the history of the church, we face the problem of retaining this central place for Christ. Both science and historical criticism have undermined the authority of ancient beliefs leaving little or no foundation for them. The tendency of today is to place small emphasis upon the classification of personality into the human and the divine. The divine is almost forgotten in the thought of most people. The emphasis is upon the human and to many it seems to be all inclusive. But some claim that Jesus possessed divine character and so the old debate continues over the issue of how man can be both human and divine. Some say Jesus is God, others say he is only man. Still others attempt to hold that he was both but usually the conception is incomprehensible. Few theories of Christ seem satisfactory. Modern Christianity has tended to evade

this issue and in so doing Christianity has suffered, for Christ cannot be so evaded. He seems to intrude into every circle of thought and fellowship. Since this is true it is our aim in this paper to study afresh his personality in the attempt to evaluate him for modern times and to ascertain in what respects He is vital to the Modern Social Gospel.

Chapter II.

The Social Gospel.

The social gospel as we know it in America came to the forefront of Christian thought in the latter part of the 19th century and early years of the 20th. Such names as Washington Gladden, Francis Greenwood Peabody and Walter Rauschenbusch are inseparably connected with this emphasis in Christianity. The movement began as a protest against the social injustices heaped upon masses of our cities' poor and ignorant people. It soon came to light that many churchmen were involved in the profitable business of exploiting these people. These early pioneers of the social gospel bravely and eloquently laid these matters upon the consciences of the Christian church. The resulting wave of protest brought some reform and a new revival of ethical religion. It became clear that Christainity had been too much divorced from ethics and from actual life situations.. For centuries Christianity had concerned itself with the salvation of souls. Men now came to see clearly that religion could not be a matter aside from the practical affairs of life.

The great contribution of Rauschenbusch was to show that this new idea of practical Christian ethics was not new at all, but the very thing Jesus

emphasized. He succeeded in making the social gospel orthodox in the Christian faith.

But other influences came to bear upon this new development. Both sociology and psychology, the newest of the sciences began to show that human personality is pretty much a matter of environment. It was at once apparent that if Christian character was to be developed, the right kind of atmosphere was essential. By implication the Christian conscience was compelled to recognize its responsibility for the existence and continuance of home and community environments inimical to the development of Christian character. There arose therefore a movement both within and without the church to remake the environments in which our less fortunate people live. This by popular consent was and is acclaimed to be the will of God and the program of Jesus. The social gospel is thus popularly believed to be this program of character building and social reconstruction through the rebuilding of the environments in which people live. It has flowered into a tremendous social betterment movement. Vast sums of money and armies of devoted workers are now participating in it. But we should note carefully

what has happened. Growing out of the teachings of Jesus and initially moved by his spirit, it has developed into a movement which in very great measure disavows any relationship to Jesus and scarcely touches the fringe of the central spiritual truth he came to teach. It is a case of the child repudiating its parent. Such movements as Boy Scouts, Health Centers, Charity Agencies, and hundreds of other welfare organizations are almost entirely unconcerned with Jesus. They place an emphasis upon the external and material aspects of the environment, to a serious ignoring of the power and place of the inner spirit of man and its relation to God. The social gospel may properly be called character-centered, whereas the Christian faith has heretofore been Christ-centered.

This movement to ignore the centrality of Christ has infected the Christian church and seems to some to be subversive and eventually to lead to decadence of these very humanitarian movements. It has already produced a strong movement to substitute social passion for God, and Jesus remains in thought as only a great teacher.

However the effects of the world war have

strongly influenced many to believe that a social passion is not an adequate resource for the spirit of man. From many sides we hear the echoes of a cry for greater spiritual undergirding and for deliverance from the distress in which the world finds itself. The Christian church is gradually recovering its self-confidence, but is having difficulty in adjusting its theology to the new sciences. A chief stumbling block is this matter of the person of Christ and the place he should have in Christian faith. Liberal Christianity is conscious of a deficient dynamic and is groping for a belief in Christ that will supply this lack. We therefore address ourselves to the task of rethinking the life and teachings of Jesus with the hope of discovering wherein he is vital to the social gospel.

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Chapter III.

The Approach to Jesus
Through His Jewish Background.

In attempting a solution to the problem set before us it is very important to grasp the significance of the approach. For centuries men have sought to understand Jesus in the light of Christian history, literature and the thoughts of great Christian leaders. This circumstance was long unnoticed but its importance is now apparent. Christianity began among Jewish people with Jewish culture and history back of them, but it was quickly removed to a Greek environment. Some of our New Testament books(1) are directed against Grecian philosophical movements that threatened to destroy Christianity. Almost the whole of Patristic literature is a reply to pagan attacks upon the new religion. The church developed its doctrines, form of organization, and order of worship under strong Greek and Roman influences. The interpretations of Christ which arose were not based primarily upon the character of the man, but upon the pagan philosophy which rose to oppose the inroad of the new faith. The fourth gospel exhibits marked attempts to interpret Christ for a Greek speaking and thinking people. It was inevitable that the personality of Christ should be distorted by conceptions which are totally alien to Jewish ways of thinking.

(1) Colossians.

If we are to correctly understand Jesus we must eradicate the distorted philosophic conceptions of Graecian origin and begin our study with an understanding of the Hebrew background out of which he sprang. Later we may return to Graecian conceptions if it seems profitable. Our purpose in this approach is to discover whether or not Jesus the teacher and prophet advocated a social gospel for his generation.

The physical features of Palestine were such as to destine the people to poverty or at best a bare subsistence. The nation never could become rich, for it lacked the essential resources. Economic activity was necessarily limited to small scale agriculture and grazing. Returns from these were precarious, by reason of meagre rainfall and that none too certain. The people were therefore acquainted from earliest times with penury, suffering and fear. Out of this condition came a hope for better conditions that seemed to them a reasonable benefit to expect from God.

Previous to their entrance into Palestine the Hebrews had been herdsmen of the desert. So deeply ingrained were the nomadic ideals that they could scarce-

ly be erased. Catching the spirit of the best of these ideals at a time when foreign influences seemed to threaten their destruction, the 8th century prophets had written these ideals into the religious aspirations and beliefs with such power that the nation could not escape the challenge to obedience and loyalty to these ideals. Around these the nation developed its total life. Every aspect of Hebrew life felt the impress of Amos, Hosea, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These men were civilization builders.

Chief among Hebrew ideals were those of hospitality, generosity and justice. The whole history of the people demanded the retention of these ancient characteristics. The feeling of equality and the spirit of democracy were powerfully fostered by tradition and economic facts. The individual stood for much, and there was a strong spirit of unselfishness. Jesus inherited these traditions and ideals fully, for he came from the lower strata of society which felt most keenly the pressure of poverty and the need of generosity.

Had the Jews been unmolested politically the outcome of their history would have been vastly

different. The story of their political voyaging is one of forlorn hopes and final tragedy, but nevertheless brilliant with courage and patriotism in the struggle for independence. Century after century Israel was exploited, bled and oppressed beyond belief, only to add fuel to the fire, of zeal for autonomy. Though the hope grew dim and the light flickered at times, it persisted and blazed up again and again. Out of the vicissitudes of political and economic struggle they developed the most profound religious and social ideal ever born to human minds. The prophets gave birth to the conception of a coming reign of God to administer justice and righteousness in the world. God, the maker and ruler of the universe, was to set up a divine order of human affairs. Thinking themselves the particular objects of God's affection, the nation was to be the center of the new Kingdom and they themselves the beneficiaries of the long overdue rights. This hope of the coming Kingdom was persistently held though variously interpreted. It dealt with the future of the world and the nation with a realism never before realized in any Utopian dreams of men. It was a definite and positive fact in their minds,

and again and again armies sacrificed their lives thinking thereby to bring in the divine order. The nation lived upon the hope of the near consummation of their dreams.

Jesus grew to manhood in full awareness of this great conception and its history. When he set himself to become a teacher he therefore found this ideal to be at the center of his thought. Now and when this Kingdom should come was the issue over which the people divided themselves into conflicting camps. There were groups and sub-groups. Everyone held some particular view of how the Kingdom was to come. Popular literature and thought was rich with these ideas. Party spirit was strong and programs were clean-cut. One popular expectation was the arrival of a divine agent, an anointed leader who by miraculous powers would put to flight all enemies of Jewry and bring all nations under subservience to himself. They called this anointed one "Messiah;" and of his character there was no end of speculation. Happy indeed would be the day of his arrival.

Into this atmosphere so vibrant with hope, so rich in tradition and spiritual power, yet so distracted by conflicting ideas and purposes, Jesus came. From early age he seemed aware of a call to perform a great mission in the life of the nation. He arrived at full

manhood with a consciousness that God had called him to leadership in the consummation of this age-long prophetic dream. As he steps into the full light of his public ministry he comes with the declaration the "the Kingdom of God is at hand"⁽¹⁾. We shall expect therefore to find Jesus saying something about the coming Kingdom. The question is, for our discussion, was his program for the reconstruction of the present world order, or did he concern himself with a program of getting people into a future, transcendent, spiritual world? Was his program practical and social? This is the problem we have selected for solution. It is one on which there has been no end of debate.

"To discerning eyes it was plain that Palestinian Judaism was hastening toward destruction. Her internal bitterness and divisions, the sufferings and wrongs of the peasantry, and the revolutionary unrest of the more vigorous elements in her population could not be hidden by the glory of the temple. What remedies had her leaders to suggest? The Sadducees saw no evils which needed remedying except lawlessness, which must be put down by force. Aristocracies are inclined to deal with symptoms not diseases. The Pharisees saw the evils in part at least, but they also merely proposed to deal with the symptoms. The Law was not being observed, then persuade the

the people to observe the law. The Synagogue was not being attended; then persuade the people to attend. The Sabbath was not being observed. The Rabbis averred that if all Israel should observe the Sabbath even once that the Kingdom would come. They did not stop to inquire why the Law was being neglected. They refused to see the moral side of it: the social difficulties and injustices, the very burdens due to the yoke of the Law which were causing the decay of Jewish ideals. As to the remedy of rebellion, anyone not completely blinded by hatred or fanaticism could see whither that would lead. It was equivalent to cutting off the nose to spite the face. The Apocalyptist, if he was not a revolutionary, merely handed an opiate to the people. The sufferings of the last days must be endured. The end was at hand. He that endured to the end would enjoy the glories of the new age. In the end the opiate aggravated the disease. At first glance Jesus' remedy does not seem to have been essentially different from that of the Apocalyptists. He used many of the terms common to them and to the prophets. He proclaimed the imminent coming of the reign of God, the advent of the Son of Man on a cloud of glory, and a great reversal in which the last shall be first and the first shall be last. But we cannot understand his solution of the problems

of his time without clearly defining the meaning of the terms he used, in the light of the meaning of those terms and the associations they had in Jewish minds. The history of three thousand years is compressed into those terms. We may rest assured that the people looked for the overthrow of the Romans and the establishment of a Jewish Empire over all the world. They expected the annihilation of all evil and the destruction of the evil doers; the rich and the mighty of whatever race were to be humbled; the poor and the suffering were to escape the age-long travail; they were now to be fed. The Messiah would reign in abundance and in righteousness for the Jews."

"Jesus only partly fell in with these conceptions. He counseled submission to Rome: 'Pay Caesar his dues', he said.¹ When tempted to turn stones to bread, he refused, on the ground that man had more important needs. Yet on the surface at least he promised the Apocalyptic reversal of conditions and the righting of immemorial wrongs. The poor were to come into possession, the hungry to be fed, the sad to rejoice. These ideals were to be realized by the labors of a personal representative of God, one especially anointed for the task.

1. Mk. 12:17.

"What form were these labors to take? What sort of Messiah did Jesus expect to be? The solution lies in accurately defining the use of the terms employed to describe his Messianic mission; the phrases, 'Son of Man' and 'Son of David'."

"As for the title 'Son of David', it was not used by Jesus himself, but by others. Once he distinctly disclaimed the title⁽¹⁾. As for this designation of the Messiah, the term was so common in Jewish literature that inevitably his contemporaries and disciples after his death, applied it to him, once they were convinced that he was The Anointed. It is equally obvious that Jesus completely rejected the Monarchical conception of Messiahship."

As for the term 'Son of Man', we find conflicting opinions among scholars over its use and meaning. In spite of the other uses it might have had in Jesus' time, it is plain from contemporary literature that it did have Messianic connotations. It is plain also that Jesus did use the term in self designation. There is no reason why any Jew who seriously believed himself commissioned to cause the will of God to be done on earth, should not so interpret his task, particularly, if he was as seems possible descended from David's

1. Mk. 12:35f.

family. Jesus very properly interpreted his sense of communion with God and devotion to the divine will in terms of the heavenly voice, 'Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased'(1). If Jesus had pondered long and deeply upon the salvation of his people from the difficulties in which they were involved, how natural, in view of the ideas rife at the time, for that conviction to be understood by him as the call to Messiahship. Did Jesus accept this title and its Apocalyptic connotations as an interpretation of his mission? The answer is, we cannot determine this matter rigidly and with clear-cut distinctions. That the term 'Son of Man' fully expressed his conceptions of his mission or that we must read into his purposes and expectations all that the term includes in 1. Enoch, for example, seems entirely improbable. Indeed the temptation in which he refused to cast himself down from the temple reads like a definite repudiation of a suggestion that he attempt to appear in the guise of one coming on the clouds of heaven. The idea of the second advent, which played so great a part in the early church, may have been completely alien to the thought of Jesus. It was quite natural for the early Christians to discover this explanation of the manner in which his claims

Lk. 1:11.

to Messiahship should be fulfilled, since he had died without completing his task. Evidence is lacking in the synoptic gospels for a purely transcendental view of the Reign of God. It was not a common view among the Jews. The end of the age was not necessarily the end of the world. The Kingdom of Heaven does not necessarily imply a Kingdom in Heaven. Over against the passages that suggest a purely transcendental kingdom(1), are others that just as emphatically suggest a kingdom here on earth, (2) or one already present. It is however a spiritual kingdom in the truest sense, for it is not a matter of material blessings, of earthly government and glory, or of external and physical force, Its sanctions are purely inward and moral; it was to be a product of social forces and would manifest social consequences".(3).

These conclusions are based upon the synoptic records of what Jesus said and taught, in the light of contemporary prevailing ideas. However they leave us with an unsolved problem, for the combination of the latter view is scarcely reconcilable with the Apocalyptic ideas. If this were all the evidence we had about Jesus' conception of the Kingdom of Heaven, the case for the social gospel would have little authority in the words of Jesus. But this is not all of the available evidence.

1. Mk. 12: 25, 10: 30

2. Mt. 6:10, Mk. 3: 24-27, 9:12f, Lk. 7:22.

3. McCown- The Genesis of the Social Gospel.

For critical reasons some doubt the authenticity of many of the recorded sayings of Jesus as he dealt with the subject of the Kingdom, but criticism can do little to change the character of the man as revealed in the gospels. It is precisely at this point that we get the greatest light upon the nature of the Kingdom. The kind of Messiah he proved to be in his life, speaks more decisively than any of his parables. In chapter four we shall try to point out the nature of the Kingdom as Jesus demonstrated it in his actions, character and ideals as well as his teachings upon the subject. It will then become apparent that his solution of the problems of his people were positively social, ethical and spiritual- in this present world primarily, and coming to a consummation in some distant future which he could not date. The redemption which Jesus brought to Israel was not at all the kind expected or desired. Precisely for this reason there arose the opposition which terminated only after he had been put out of the way.

We began this study of Jesus with a glimpse of his Jewish background, in order to throw light upon the man as he worked and taught. We saw that he rejected the contemporary Jewish ideals of the Kingdom, because he held higher ideals and saw that the proposed methods of achieving them (the Jewish ideals) were futile. Neither by political efforts of the nation, no matter how heroic, nor by divine intervention would the ideal be attained. The facts of life made such a realization impossible. No society or individual for that matter, could express God's will and purpose except they first catch God's Spirit and understand Him. Nor could armed force establish righteousness. How then could the Kingdom be brought in?

" As a matter of fact the Kingdom did begin with Jesus, and in none of the expected ways. Both John the Baptist and Jesus began their preaching with this word: 'Repent Ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'.¹⁾ Preliminary to a detailed examination of its true nature it will be well to outline the results we hope to substantiate. 1. The Kingdom is an order of life in this present world, 2. Its significance is not outward in form, 3, but is inward, ethical and spiritual. Combining the three ideas into one, the Kingdom is the embodiment of the ideal life which Jesus lived. How natural and normal

this makes the story of the Kingdom, in place of the artificialities of the Apocalyptic hopes and the futility of a petty monarchy in a hostile world. It is essential that we put aside all predisposition to think of the Kingdom as another name for personal religion or for the church. In the true Kingdom we must expect to find the fulfillment of the age long social hopes of the Jewish nation."

"Jesus adopted the ancient name, Kingdom of God, because it was admirably adapted to portray his message. The right to rule human affairs was God's. Just as Jesus found the presence of God in his own life covering every field of his endeavor, supplying the inspiration and atmosphere for all he taught and did, so he conceived of God's rule in the lives of all men. It is God that reigns and the life of man is a life from God, in God and for God whose beneficent will is to be done. So not alone his teachings about the kingdom(though these are in no wise to be discounted) but all he did and said about the way men ought to live, all his inspiration and his ideal of life illustrate what he meant by the term."

"Let us look first at the sayings that deal more with the external aspects of the Kingdom. For example he des-

cribes it as precious. Its secret is like a treasure hidden in a field, to be obtained only by him who is eager and wise enough(1). It is like a pearl of great price, worthy to be obtained at all cost(2). Or he describes its enlargements. It becomes great from the smallest beginning in the manner of the mustard seed, for transcending its apparent promise(3). It is pervasive like leaven, quietly transforming that in which it is placed(4). It grows, no man knows how, like the seed planted in the ground, responsive to unseen forces(5). It comes unobserved and is in the midst of you even while he speaks(6). Or he tells of the imperfection of its manifestation in the present time. It is like the field in which the tares grow among the wheat, not yet to be relieved of their presence(7). It is like the net that gathers fish of every kind, good and bad, which have to be separated(8). Or he tells how exacting it is among those expecting it. The last shall be first and the first shall be last(9). It reminds him of wise and foolish virgins who respectively seize and miss their opportunity at the wedding feast(10), It shall be taken away from the children of the Kingdom if they do not discern its spirit(11), and many from the east and the west shall receive its blessings instead. Publicans and sinners shall enter it before the chief priests and

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| 1. Mt. 13:44 | 5. Mk. 4:26-29 | 9. Mk. 9:35 |
| 2. Mt. 13:45-46. | 6. Lk. 17:20-21 | 10. Mt. 25:1-13 |
| 3. Mt. 3:31-32. | 7. Mt. 13:24-30 | 11. Mt. 8:11-12 |
| 4. Mt. 13:33. | 8. Mt. 8:11-12 | |

elders who are blind to its character(1). In these sayings and others that resemble them he describes certain relations and workings of the Kingdom, and presents its various appeals with power, but he does not tell us what it is. If we wish to live our lives in the Kingdom, we are not yet informed how it can be done. Is it obedience to God? Yes! but what obedience? He helps us sometimes by speaking of the possibilities or impossibilities of entering the Kingdom. It is desperately hard for a rich man to enter,- nay it is humanly impossible, and possible at all only because with God all things are possible. Only with a righteousness better than that of the scribes and Pharisees can one enter. Only in the spirit of little children can men come in. Only by a new birth from above is it possible. But these sayings are indefinite. Wherein is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees insufficient? We are yet in the dark as to the inner secret. However we approach the secret in two scenes, each thrice recorded. On one occasion the disciples were disputing as to which of them was to be the greatest in the coming Kingdom(2), on the other little children were brought to him to receive his blessing(3). The replies of Jesus were these: 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven', or 'except ye turn and

1. Mt. 21:31

2. Mt. 18:1f, Mk. 9:34, Lk. 9:46f.

3. Mt. 18:3f, Mk. 9:36, Lk. 18: 17.

become as little children, ye shall not enter therein'. Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of God'. 'Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name receiveth me, and whosoever receiveth me receiveth Him that sent me', 'for he that is least among you shall be great'. 'If any man would be first among you he shall be last of all and servant of all'. All these sayings are variant forms of the same idea and the symbolism is plain. To be without selfimportance, humble, simple minded, trustful, receptive, to be content with lowliness and let all else be great, this is the kind of spirit for which the Kingdom is prepared. To have this spirit is exceedingly difficult. If it were not that the Kingdom is God's own and He is almighty and gracious, no man could enter it. Men do not enter it with heads high as if they were doing it of themselves and were to receive glory for it. Their hearts bow in humility as they receive the gift of God and begin to live the life of the Kingdom.

We have been led closer and closer to the heart of the matter and come now to discover the inner secret. Two of the disciples, James and John came to Jesus with a request for a promise of special honors, one on the right hand and one on the left, in the coming Kingdom.

In answering so ambitious a request, he warns them that they have no idea of what they are seeking, and he asks them in turn if they are able to drink of the cup from which he must drink, and undergo the deep consecration of suffering that he will have to endure on his way to the throne of the Kingdom? As they knew not what they asked so they knew not what they answered when they said they were able. Whereupon he told them that they should indeed drink of the cup of his suffering, but that even that could not insure to them the seats they were asking for. These seats were to be assigned to those for whom they are prepared, and they are to be occupied by those who are prepared to take possession of them. Those who can take these seats, being fit, will take possession by reason of their fitness.

When the other ten disciples heard of the attempted scheme to get preferred positions of honor they were very angry and precipitated a quarrel which is the occasion for a deeply significant teaching. They are all wrong, he tells them. The whole matter has been conceived after the manner of the world. James and John have thought of the Kingdom as honors which the King confers, and, that bring elevation and compliments to the recipient of the gift. He bids them banish this whole

idea. In God's Kingdom he who would be great must be a servant, and he who would be greatest must be a servant beyond all the rest. Service, or rather the spirit of service is the test. The higher the destination the lowlier the way by which one must come to it. This is the method of the Kingdom. It is a Kingdom of mutual help and service is its law. ~~and~~. Jesus makes this plain by reminding them that he 'came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many (1). By this complete devotion of himself to others whom he can bless, he has set the type for his Kingdom and for all life. One who would sit near the throne in the Kingdom must be very much like the King. The whole idea of visible reward and personal exaltation must be dropped from the conception of the Kingdom.

In thus describing the character of the Kingdom Jesus leads us to see an ideal of a different kind than hereto fore conceived by man. The Kingdom is a social order in which mutual service and helpfulness reign supreme, motivated by a love for others that brooks no obstacles, even death. Such an exalted conception of the life men should lead found concrete expression in the very deeds and character of the teacher. He embodied

1. *Mk. 10:45*

the ideals he set forth. Every opportunity for service to people he sought out and fulfilled. There was in him a spirit that won the love and respect of those he helped. So earnest was he in his desire to serve men's deepest needs that he stopped nowhere this side of voluntary death, when he saw that by so doing he could reveal even more of the divine character and will. The events of his life and the spirit of the man are too well known to need rehearsing further. Added to the teachings just recounted we see that the evidence for the social character of the Kingdom is quite complete.

The Kingdom of God was then, to be a world of humanity in which service and helpfulness are facts of experience. Service is not a doctrine to which men do justice by their thinking. It is a most concrete thing. Men living together have their needs of each other and the ability to help. Only in the actual, present world is there a field for the expression of this Godlike impulse.

The Kingdom is also a world of personal experience and character. It was axiomatic with Jesus that a social order, a nation, a world could not be genuinely moved and ruled by the spirit of service unless individual

personalities were first reconstructed. He began his thinking with the recognition of the fact that individually men needed a new outlook, a new spirit. From an inferior mind, an impure heart, a selfish will, a proud preference, an indolent temper, a grasping ambition, a haughty isolation, a cold indifference to men, a contempt for self-sacrifice, or from any form of ungodliness, men's personalities must first be delivered, before the spirit of the Kingdom could manifest itself. The working of this transformation he set out to accomplish.

The kingdom is a realm of ethics. All social life has a basis in ethics. Economics is important, but it is not the only important thing about life. The new contribution of Jesus is precisely at this point, that after all, the spiritual things are more important than the material and in a social order worthy of God and God's children, ethics are of supreme importance.

The kingdom of God is religious, because from God are drawn the motives, the inspiration, the pattern and the power for its life. The hope of success is built upon the daily presence and power of God in human lives. Just as Jesus drew his inspiration, faith, courage and hope from his fellowship with God, so must every man who

would truly enter into the realm." (1).

When therefore we perceive Jesus in the guise of a humble carpenter-teacher trying to interpret the true ideal of God to his first century Palestinian hearers we observe that his message was a practical but revolutionary spiritual-social message. He began with the thought of individual reconstruction. He met individual problems with a scientific analysis of their needed readjustments, e. g. the rich young ruler. He did what he could to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and the sick and inspired others to do likewise. Contrary to the strong Zealot spirit he advised submission to Roman domination. He opposed certain religious ideas and customs as being devoid of spiritual significance. He met opposition, abuse, misrepresentation and persecution with patient, kindly love. In every way he lived the ideal he taught, trying to convince men that such was the way of eternal and Godlike life. It was all done in first century Palestine, with the one purpose of redeeming his own nation. It was a social gospel he preached and interpreted in action. Of course he believed in a future life. It was axiomatic with him to think thus. The very soul of his desire and ministry is summed up in the prayer he taught his disciples: 'Thy Kingdom come, and thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven'. (2)

2. Mt. 6:9-10, Lk. 11:4.

1. CLARK, The Ideal of Jesus.

Chapter V.

The Man Himself.

We have indicated that Jesus preached a social gospel, and that he did it with confidence in its power to save the life of his people. But he was not successful in the attempt to save the nation. They soon put him to death, and then his followers began to take his message to the world outside Palestine. The question remains, what does this social gospel mean to 20th century America and what place in it does Jesus occupy? The social gospel, or more accurately, a social gospel is now widely accepted in the church, but there is some question about its identification with its founder. There is also considerable question about the survival of the humanitarian spirit and the good work it is doing, apart from God and from the one who gave the whole movement its original start. Can we interpret Christ as to make it possible for modern, scientifically minded men to give Jesus a central place in their thinking and endeavors for social betterment? Already there is much evidence that the humanitarian spirit is not able to satisfy the human personality and men need something else to keep alive the social passion. The social gospel Jesus preached has captured much of the world, in some form or other and men are trying to preach it. Though designed for 1st century Palestine it has proved to be

universal in character. It demands our attention and consideration. As for the place of Jesus in it that remains to be worked out.

The early Christologies may profitably be ignored until the less philosophical aspects of the problem are well in hand. We do well to go back in our minds to the days of Jesus to catch again the historical perspective of him. After his death and resurrection (as his disciples believed) the movement he started was carried on by the disciples. But the opposition was too strong for it to succeed in Israel and it was forced out into the Graeco-Roman world. Under the leadership of Paul, a converted Pharisee, the Christian message was interpreted to a Greek speaking world. Not without basis in the words of Jesus himself, and certainly upon the authority of Paul's experience of conversion, Paul began to interpret the message and personality of Jesus in terms which were scarcely dropped from his lips, ere they had a different meaning. While the transition steps are not all apparent, it soon became the accustomed thing to think of the carpenter-teacher as being in some manner, God Himself. Everywhere the gospel was preached, Jesus stood in the thought of men

as the object of worship, the center of their religious experience and the final authority in all things religious. Within a century after his death there began those controversies over the nature of his person which have led again and again to division in the church. Graecian metaphysical conceptions largely shaped these early controversies, and so exhaustively were the subjects treated that it seems as if thinking on these lines was completed for all time. But recent decades have witnessed a revival of interest in the personality of Christ, along new lines, and a much more natural and human personality has been presented to us. The philosophical cloaks in which he has been enshrouded and which are so alien to scientific thought, are now removed. In the modern spirit we purpose to take an altogether too brief a glance at the man, Jesus.

As we see him pictured in the synoptic gospels there are three things about him which seem to remove him from the realm of natural humanity. With the exception of the gospel of Mark, it is asserted that he was supernaturally conceived in his mothers womb. All the gospels report that he performed miracles of supernatural character, and that he was raised again from the dead. Luke's gospel declares that after the resurrection

he ascended into heaven. If these things are true of him, then surely there is reason to believe that he was more than ordinary man.

Concerning the supernatural birth it is important to observe that Jesus never made any such claim about himself, nor utilized such a claim to substantiate his words. In fact he deliberately refused to authenticate his words by anything supernatural. The fact that such a claim was made about his birth, by his disciples a half century later is a strong indication that the story is not true., for it was used by them to prove his supernatural character and apparently carried weight with the people. In view of the prevailing belief in miraculous powers common among the people, and the authority and influence such powers could wield, the refusal of Jesus to utilize this channel of influence is a very strong indication that he did not consider himself other than natural man. There is not the slightest hint of a belief in a supernatural birth among any of the people with whom Jesus lived and dealt during his life time. The story of the virgin birth arose many years afterward. It is our conclusion therefore that there is no truth in the alleged virgin birth.

To have performed the miracles and wonders attributed to him in the gospels, we must concede to him the possession of either power or knowledge absolutely unique in the race. Of course there are stories of such things in all literature, but they are not authenticated. His natural birth precludes the advancement of claims that by logical processes(only) would account for the possession of such extraordinary ability. The evidence required to prove the historicity of the miracles of healing, raising the dead and nature control are manifestly impossible to secure, for those events are 1900 years in the past. The best that can be done to substantiate these stories is to prove the authenticity of the records. Confessedly most of the records are not the work of eye witnesses of any of the recorded events, but represent a collection of source material from various people, some of whom were eye witnesses. At best the records are second-handed and much of them is more removed than that. Therefore we have grave reason to doubt the literal truth of the alleged miracles. Especially true is this when we consider the fact that many of them are contrary to known laws of nature and life.

A more serious objection to the miracles is the

reflection they throw upon the character of God. If the records are literally true, then God is guilty of withholding from the human race forever, except during this brief period of Jesus' ministry, the knowledge and power necessary to relieve human suffering and misery. Presuming that the race is one hundred thousand years old, then during all this time God has ruled that man should suffer and only escape suffering by the slow process of discovery of the laws of life and nature, but during a short period of about three years he should reveal himself as more than willing to contradict all the past and the future, and serve men's needs with joyous love and supernatural power. If Jesus was God in man, then God demonstrated a duplicity of attitude that is incredible of him.

There is one ground however, upon which we may give credence to the miracles, e.g. that Jesus had a knowledge of spiritual laws of which no other has ever gained possession. These laws transcending the known laws of the universe could be utilized to work wonders contrary to normal experience. If we ignore the previous argument, then this is a valid possibility and can scarcely be denied on valid grounds. It is a legitimate way out, theoretically. But if we contrast the

known laws and workings of life and nature, with the seeming crude magic of the wonders of Jesus, it becomes apparent that the two are in two entirely separate realms. It is scarcely cr^edible that Jesus was utilizing the known laws of nature when he fed the five thousand or calmed the storm on the sea or raised Lazarus from the dead. That he might have caused certain healing by faith, seems possible from evidence even in our time, but where bones grew to maturity instantly, and eyes that had never seen, saw instantly, or where withered limbs became whole instantly, we can not put confidence in those stories. These stories came out of an age in which magic and the like were commonly believed in and practiced, and where people held power because of the impression they could make through magical means, We are compelled to believe that these stories of miracles in the New Testament are the result of the bias of the times and at best have but a meagre ground in fact.

When we come to the resurrection narratives we have a problem somewhat different from that of the virgin birth or the miracles. We cannot escape the fact that in some manner the immediate followers of Jesus became convinced that he did not remain a corpse in the grave, but rose to life again and continued to live. In some way they

were certain that his personality was alive and among them. The assurance of this made new men of them. How shall we account for the resurrection faith.

The notion of the physical resurrection has many difficulties which are impossible of solution. His ascension into heaven, the mysterious appearances and disappearances are contradictory to the facts of common experience and the known laws of nature. If he arose, it was something other than a physical resurrection.

If Jesus rose from the dead it was a spiritual experience to him and his appearances to his disciples were not as a physical being but as a spirit. The Hebrew mind has no difficulty with such a conception, but not so the western mind. To try to fathom the depths of speculation upon the nature of spirit and its condition after death, would only land us in a mental morass. The libraries are full of such speculation and almost none of it can be verified by scientific tests. Therefore we do well in this paper to ignore this aspect of the problem. It leads nowhere. A more fruitful effort is desired. We can explain the resurrection faith and the continued presence of Jesus in the religious experience of men today, upon another

basis. This we will attempt to do, to show that we need not concede the truth of the physical resurrection in order to account for the resurrection faith. We are dealing now with something intangible, unseen by the physical eye, yet a fact of consciousness. No living person has actually seen the living Christ with the human eye, in the same sense as one has seen a friend or a tree or an airplane. The resurrection faith can be accounted for by the power of the personality of Jesus to influence other lives during his own ministry. The manner of his death, and the purpose back of it when added to the character of his work, teaching and personality combine to make him the most unforgettable person known in history. He made an impress upon lives that nothing could erase. This same thing happens over and over again in the common occurrences of our times. His continued presence today is a demonstration of the reality of a law in the realm of personality and spiritual facts, that is analogous to the law of the conservation of energy in the physical world. There is no destruction of energy. Jesus demonstrated a kind of personality that could write itself so deeply into the minds and hearts of others who knew him, that not even death could erase it, nor could all the succeeding centuries. His disciples

though deeply discouraged after his death, soon felt the significance of their fellowship with him and the kingly quality of his personality and stung by the shame of their cowardice in deserting him made bold to openly acknowledge their loyalty to him. Memory revived precious experiences and hopes, and out of these grew the reality of his continued presence. They felt the nearness and reality of his person, even more vividly than when he was actually with them. His superb character made this possible.

While this is not an adequate statement of this position, it indicates the line of thought along which we proceed. It must suffice for this occasion, and we conclude that the resurrection faith does not demand of us to consider Jesus to have been supernatural in character or in person.

We conclude then, after this brief discussion of these matters, that Jesus was in no respect essentially different in nature. We best understand him as a man like ourselves. The alleged supernatural character ascribed to him in the gospels is not to be taken literally.

But who can understand a man? Who knows what personality is? Who of us can understand ourselves? Surely

this is the mystery of mysteries. But having said that he was like us, we must quickly add that we make no claim that we are in all respects like him. The truth seems to be that both he and we are men, but also that his personality is as different as any other personalities have been. He had distinguishing marks which put him pretty much in a class by himself. Appraise the quality of his manhood. Measure the magnitude of his ideals and reflect upon the ^{grandeur of} his achievement in dedicating himself completely to his ideal. No man since the days of Christ, even his most devoted followers have measured up to the quality of his personality. No man has grasped in his soul the vision of God's Kingdom and dedicated himself so completely to its realization among men, as did Jesus. Nineteen hundred years of western history, and of late, world history, have demonstrated the ethical insight and the nearness to the heart of reality and truth of this humble prophet of Galilee. His unquenchable spirit has flowed down into the common life of humanity the world over, to shed light upon the dark ways of men's endeavors and guide their wandering spirits homeward. These facts are too great for most of us to think about, but when after long experience and much reflection we grasp the significance of life, we come to see that in Jesus there

was a unique personality far too great to be understood, and only partly appreciated.

Jesus dared to believe that the life of God could become a reality in human experience. He practiced it so assiduously and with such sincerity that men could not escape its influence. The centuries have born witness to the timelessness of his ideals and the certain consummation of his dream. It has taken the world 1900 years to begin to grasp the power and greatness of his dream for humanity. We today share for the first time, something of the true import of his message, and in the face of its exacting demands upon us for purity, faith, love and devotion, feel the greatness of the personality back of his work.

When we remember that Jesus had none of the advantages of the modern day, such as university training, world wide knowledge and communication, the researches of science and the works of art, we marvel at the power of his mind. The great men of history have each possessed some quality that gives them distinction and makes them worthy of honor, but not even by making a composite of the worlds great men, could we have a personality comparable to Jesus. Jesus is a revelation of something that is

God given,- the majestic quality of human personality. He is a demonstration of what personality may be. He represents the height of achievement to which man may climb.

Having made these assertions about the personality of Jesus, which we must leave to detailed individual study to authenticate, we ought to at least attempt an explanation of his greatness. We undertake such a task aware that until further light is thrown upon the nature of personality, we cannot adequately explain his greatness. However, we can take a few steps in the right direction.

1. Jesus was a man with a great purpose. It gave direction and power to all he did. There was no wasted effort or false moves, because he knew what he wanted to do. His power was concentrated into one channel. The inevitable result was effectiveness. But it is one thing to recognize the truth of this matter, and give mental approval to the proposition. It is a vastly greater thing and infinitely more difficult to grasp a purpose and build your life around it. Jesus accomplished this latter difficult feat.

2. Jesus possessed an undiscouragable faith in his ideal and purpose. Fear of failure, that most

deadly enemy of efficient work, never paralyzed his will and caused him to falter or turn aside. The blaze of glory in which he ended his life is the most dynamic stimulus ever offered to discouraged and weary hearts. Nothing, not even death could extinguish the faith that his purpose would be fulfilled. Precisely because all brave souls have something of this experience, do they find in him the evidence of his humanity.

3. Jesus dedicated himself to an unselfish ideal. He came seeking no personal glory or selfish satisfaction. He was dominated by one great passion, e.g. to serve humanity. Even greater than that his service was one of redemption from self,- from humanity's selfishness, greed, hate, fear, trivialities, callousness- all its suffering and ills. He shared the lot of every public servant. Men failed to understand him, and returned hate for love. He met this, with Love unconquerable, because he himself did not matter. Only his cause and people's needs were of concern to him. Such complete dedication is too great for us to truly appreciate.

4. Jesus loved people. The genuineness and power of his love is astonishing. He met all classes

with a spirit that proved socially uplifting and therapeutic. It is astounding how he kept his faith in people, for we know that there are many whom it is difficult to love and in whom it is even more difficult to have confidence. It is much easier to have regard for property and things than to have respect for all people. Jesus could do what so many of us find impossible,--maintain a love and respect for people.

5. Jesus was a leader. People recognized his command over them. The disciples that gathered around him felt the authority and dependability of his personality. They were confident in responding to his suggestions. His word inspired confidence. He was thus able to project his personality into other lives. He made the foundation of his leadership, the friendship that he developed between himself and his followers. He made them partners with him. He loved them, thought of their welfare and shared with them his deepest desires and highest aspirations. They knew that he expected great things of them.

6. Jesus was deeply spiritual himself, and he based his life upon the spiritual quality he recognized

in others. He believed so profoundly in the spiritual nature of man, that he considered everything else about man, of lesser importance. "What should it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul", said Jesus. (1). While he found very few people who would follow him in this conception of man, he held to it wholeheartedly. He perceived that down below the surface of life is a much stronger reality than appears in the common search and scramble for Things. Any basis other than the spiritual would not support the structure of human society. All that he taught about living, the kingdom of God, of values, flows so naturally out of this basic thought that we cannot give adequate emphasis to its importance to him. He challenged all men's thought at this very point, and himself pioneered the way to life eternal. In so doing he has turned the tide of human affairs forever. His basic thought is a challenge to the world. No man can engage in life's struggles and reflect upon the significance of them without considering this basic truth. Again we realize his common humanity.

1. Mk 8:36.

7. Jesus believed in God. His life was God-inspired. Consciously and completely he yielded his desire to the will of God as he understood it. We are at a loss to account for this religious faith.

In this more than any other aspect of personality he is unique, not in the kind of faith and communion, but in the character of it. It was so real, so perfect, so immediate, so natural and simple, that we are mystified. He was as one who passively yielded himself to another, yet in so doing finding his own full and spontaneous development and expression. "In the beginning, God," was a reality with him which staggers the minds of the saints. Of inestimable value to the race is his contribution of faith in God.

We have briefly mentioned seven characteristics of the personality of Jesus which indicate his oneness with humanity and at the same time explain in some measure the uniqueness of his character. We have rejected as unhistorical the claims to supernatural character. We reiterate our belief in his essential oneness with humanity, insisting that in physical body he was like us all, yet in the soul of him so far surpassing even

our greatest men as to actually put him in a class by himself. We do not say that no one will ever achieve what he achieved, but would devoutly desire that all men might measure up to the standard set by him. As a prophet and teacher of the gospel of Love, Service, and Goodwill, he has rightfully inherited a place of esteem, reverence and adoration in the hearts of men. He has been and is saving humanity from its sins. Slowly the redemptive Love which serves humanity's needs is working its way into the hearts of men and winning their loyalty to God's ideal. Jesus stands for and symbolizes the reality and truth of this power in the Universe. He is the most convincing evidence of the supremacy of the spiritual in man. This is our theory of Christ. If it errs, it is on the side of understatement and under-appreciation of his humanity. It remains in the final chapter to show the place of Jesus in the social gospel.

Chapter VI.

The Place of Christ
In the Social Gospel.

The social gospel has this psychological basis, i.e. that the environment has a predominant influence in the formation of character, either good or bad. Hence it is vitally important that good environment be provided for developing personlity. It is the business of intelligent and good people to provide the right kind of environment. We cannot deny the statement of this principle. From countless sources the evidence comes in that the environment has a great influence in the lives of people.

Now a large part of the environment of people is of a physical nature, i.e. the house, its size, shape, location, space surrounding it, materials, furnishings, etc. Countless other physical materials make up the total environment. But it is a mistake to think that these things are the total environment. The term includes much more than the things we experience, and it is always timely to point this out. The influences that shape character must include such items as personalities, ideas, emotions. It is therefore an error to put full confidence in the recreative power of a good physical environment. Many a worker with youth has realized the ineffectiveness of good

physical surroundings. How often have we found that that a move from poor surroundings to good ones has not solved character problems, but presented new and more serious ones. Reliance upon the recreative power of the physical environment is clearly a misplaced confidence. The advocates of the social gospel must waken to the fact that God's Kingdom will not be ushered in when all men are provided with decent homes and ample equipment for play and work. These things are important and are essential in many cases, but are by no means adequate for the whole task.

Another phase of the social emphasis has been to utilize groups of people, such as the family, school, club, gang, etc, for the creation of finer character. The theory is that, bring a person into a group and he will seek to live up to the group spirit. There are many very powerful and popular movements of this kind among all ages, and the work they do is thoroughly commendable for the most part. The job of the director of the group is to shape the group spirit. We have no word of disparagement for this method, but it is important to point out a serious limitation. The facts are that this is a round about way of approaching the problem of an

individual. No group ever enters as intimately into the inner spirit and confidence of the individual brought into the group, as a single person may. Friendships are not between groups and an individual, but between single individuals in the group. If the leader of a group is skillful enough he may succeed in creating a group spirit which is the expression^{of} the personality of some members of the group and to this each member will respond and be made finer in character, but my experience has been that these achievements in group life are rare accomplishments outside the home. The efficiency of group activity in remaking character or in building normal character is not very high. The high standard of skillful leadership required is scarcely ever met. Hence we cannot place too much confidence in this method of bringing to pass God's will.

Something else is needed in addition to the two programs and philosophies suggested, and at this point we discover the place of Christ in the social gospel. Jesus recognized the fact that personality is the result of other things than the physical environment and of people around us. There is within every person something he may call his own, which may even be independent of

of all surroundings. The spirit, the soul, the self is an independent factor in human beings, which may even rise to completely change its environment to suit its own desires. This self is free to act as it wills, either for the good, the bad or the indifferent. It is capable of response to intangible, invisible, imaginative things, and makes these responses as it desires. This self may be trained in early years, but when it comes to maturity there is always a remainder ^{That} retains its right and power to free and unpredictable behavior. Such a power within human beings is of equal importance with the environment when considering the task of creating personality. Jesus recognized its importance even beyond the place just given it. He made his appeal to men on the basis of the power of the free will to determine character and conduct, even when other circumstances were in strong opposition. He recognized the autonomy of free will and made his appeal to it, rather than to the need for good environment.

Having this place of central importance in human life, the will of the individual is to be reckoned with in the matter of social reconstruction. The social gos-

pel must recognize this fact about personality and give place to the powerful appeal to the will through the motive of Love, which Jesus makes. The social gospel must recognize the fact that the personality of Christ has been the instrument of power in the reconstruction of character upon the basis herein stated. Not only is this historically true, but it is a unique fact among the religions of the world. The social gospel cannot ignore these facts, and remain a real gospel. If it is to retain power it must retain Christ as an essential part of its message. To ignore him or give him a place that is not central is to water down and dilute the spirit back of the shaping of environment and the working of groups, until it loses its dynamic. Jesus has revealed in his character and teachings the true nature of man. Social reconstruction cannot proceed without his revelation and personal influence, any more than engineers can build the San Francisco Bay bridge without blue prints. If humanity is to move forward in a direction characteristic of human nature it cannot escape taking Jesus into account. He stands in the path of our progress and by force of truth, compels our attention.

Jesus is essential in the appeal to the will, because he is so concrete. a demonstration of spirit-

ual personality.

Jesus is essential to the social gospel because he perfectly reveals the way men can relate themselves to the true source of spiritual life. Without his guidance, men would be groping in the dark for communion with the source of spiritual life. We need but to review the history of religions to see in how many futile and unfruitful ways men are even now seeking contact with the heart of reality. Eliminate the truth that Jesus reveals and men are back in primitive experience of God.

Jesus stands for the fact that most men cannot find inner harmony and spiritual power without entering into the filial relationship with God which he found so completely satisfying. For the majority this entails a new attitude, a new outlook, a new spirit, - for no amount of rationalizing can dissipate the fact of wrong attitudes, bad intentions, lustful desires and selfishness. "Ye must be born again" is a stubborn fact of human nature in its relation to divine things.

Jesus is essential to the social gospel as a constant corrective of a one sided program, dealing largely with the physical environment.

We may sum up the substance of this section by saying that Christ is, as he has been from the beginning, the Saviour of life. Not in some pseudo-theological

sense, but in reality he transforms men who open their souls to the cleansing light of his person. There is no other power that can work such transformations in human personality. He is as essential to the human spirit as is the sunlight to the physical world in which we live.

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